

Inside the World's Biggest E-Waste Dump

This is a discussion of the (former) Agbogbloshie wetland on the outskirts of Accra in Ghana. It's an illegal e-waste dumping ground where outdated technology from the West is dumped and left to poison the land, air, and people. Those who work in this area salvage parts for what amounts to only dollars a day. In many cases, students who should be in school are working in Agbogbloshie.

Environmental concerns include fluorocarbon emissions, as well as lead, mercury, and hydrogen cyanide seeping into the soil in and around the dumping ground. Many of the workers admit to using marijuana as a deterrent to the headaches and chest pains they experience due to the toxicity of the environment.

In 2014, the organization Pure Earth opened a recycling center in Agbogbloshie to combat the adverse effects on the environment and the health of its people.

More Resources

Use the following resources to conduct your research.

- **“Agbogbloshie: The World’s Largest E-Waste Dump—in Pictures” (McElvaney, 2014):** www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2014/feb/27/agbogbloshie-worlds-largest-e-waste-dump-in-pictures
- **“(UPDATE) Transforming Agbogbloshie: From Toxic Dump Into Model Recycling Center” (Sim, 2015):** www.pureearth.org/blog/photos-transforming-agbogbloshie-from-toxic-e-waste-dump-into-model-recycling-center
- **“Anatomy of a Myth: The World’s Biggest E-Waste Dump Isn’t” (Minter, 2015):** <http://shanghaiscrap.com/2015/06/anatomy-of-a-myth-the-worlds-biggest-e-waste-dump-isnt>
- **“Ghana: Digital Dumping Ground” (Frontline/World, 2009):** www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/ghana804/video/video_index.html

Discussion Questions

Use the following questions to facilitate your classroom discussion.

- *Where do you think this problem began? How far back can we trace the origin point?*
- *Having an idea where it started, what do you think could have been done to avoid it?*
- *Why do you think it is we allow things like this to continue happening?*
- *Imagine having a dumping ground like this in your city. How would it affect your life and the lives of those in your community?*
- *Where else in the world is this happening, and what is being done to stop it?*
- *Who has tried to solve this problem so far, and what have they done?*
- *What could Agbogbloshie do differently to help the environment and the people working there?*
- *What affirmative action would you take to help solve this problem?*

Global Digital Citizen Assessment Framework

Use this four-phase assessment framework to establish the connection between environmental stewardship and global awareness and action.

1. **Phase 1 (awareness, connection, remembering):** Has an awareness of some of the environmental issues and, when encouraged, may participate in activities to reduce this or raise awareness of them
2. **Phase 2 (understanding, applying):** Has an interest in and understanding of some environmental issues; supports local environmental activities, sometimes taking a stand on significant issues
3. **Phase 3 (analyzing, evaluating):** Shows an interest in global environmental issues and investigates causes or concerns before offering support; often takes a stand on current matters, undertaking appropriate actions that raise awareness; sometimes shows stewardship of his or her world
4. **Phase 4 (evaluating, creating):** Shows an active interest in global environmental issues; validates causes or concerns before offering support; takes a stand on matters of importance, undertaking appropriate actions that raise awareness of concerns through legitimate and appropriate means; shows stewardship, care, and responsibility for his or her world; thinks globally while acting locally

Discussion and Assessment Debrief

After conversation, students develop their own opinions about the assessment.

- *How did you evaluate this line from the assessment framework and why?*
- *How does the line from the assessment framework fit into the conversation?*
- *What does it mean for us? For the community? For the world?*

References and Resources

- Frontline/World. (2009, June 23). *Ghana: Digital dumping ground* [Video file]. Accessed at www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/ghana804/video/video_index.html on January 16, 2017.
- McElvaney, K. (2014, February 27). Agbogbloshie: The world's largest e-waste dump—in pictures. *The Guardian*. Accessed at www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2014/feb/27/agbogbloshie-worlds-largest-e-waste-dump-in-pictures on January 16, 2017.
- Minter, A. (2015, June 16). *Anatomy of a myth: The world's biggest e-waste dump isn't* [Blog post]. Accessed at <http://shanghaiscrap.com/2015/06/anatomy-of-a-myth-the-worlds-biggest-e-waste-dump-isnt> on January 16, 2017.
- Shibata, M. (2015, June 11). *Inside the world's biggest e-waste dump*. Accessed at <http://motherboard.vice.com/read/inside-the-worlds-biggest-e-waste-dump> on January 16, 2017.
- Sim, M. (2015, June 25). (UPDATE) *Transforming Agbogbloshie: From toxic dump into model recycling center* [Blog post]. Accessed at www.pureearth.org/blog/photos-transforming-agbogbloshie-from-toxic-e-waste-dump-into-model-recycling-center on January 16, 2017.